Talking Points

Interim Guidelines for the Control and Prevention of Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) Skin and Soft Tissue Infections in Non-Healthcare Settings
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Four simple steps can help prevent and control skin infections, including those caused by MRSA:

- Hand washing is the single most important behavior in preventing the transmission of many infectious diseases, including MRSA
- Keep open wounds clean and covered
- Don't share personal items such as towels, razors, and bedding
- Clean environmental surfaces regularly

Using the Guidelines

- These guidelines are intended for use by public heath professionals and individuals who work in or make decisions for group living settings or activities where close contact between individuals can be expected.
- These guidelines focus on *non-healthcare settings*. There are a number of documents that address clinical management of MRSA or MRSA in health care facilities and long term care facilities. [1,2,3,4]
- These guidelines systematically address the following topics for each of the non-healthcare settings: evaluation of wounds, referral to a health care provider, communication with those affected and prevention strategies.
- For assistance with suspected clusters/outbreaks or questions about the use of these guidelines contact the local public health department or the Montana Communicable Disease Control and Prevention Bureau, Epidemiology Program at (406) 444-0273.

Background Information

- *Should I be concerned about skin infections?*
  Skin infections are a fairly common occurrence. The majority of skin infections are caused by bacteria commonly carried on the skin or in the nose of healthy people. These bacteria include some that are called *Staphylococcus aureus*, or "staph".
- *What is MRSA?*
  Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) is resistant to a number of antibiotics. Staph infections, including MRSA, are most commonly found among persons in healthcare facilities who have weakened immune systems. However, these infections are becoming more common in people who haven't had contact with a healthcare facility. Recent national data indicates that as many as 59% of skin infections seen in emergency departments can be attributed to MRSA.[5]
- *How serious are MRSA infections?*
  Staph and MRSA commonly cause skin infections such as boils and abscesses that may resemble a spider bite; however, MRSA can cause more serious infections such as pneumonia or blood infections. MRSA skin infections can be treated, but they may be difficult to cure. Prompt recognition and treatment is important.
- *How is MRSA spread in the community and who is at risk?*
  MRSA is spread through skin to skin contact (usually by hands) and contacting contaminated surfaces. The risk is highest for people who: (1) have close contact with individuals with open wounds; (2) have poor hygiene; or (3) associate with others in close quarters.

References

1. Gorwitz RJ, Jernigan DB, Powers JH, Jernigan JA, and Participants in the CDC Convened Experts' Meeting on Management of MRSA in the Community. Strategies for clinical management of MRSA in the community: Summary of an experts' meeting convened by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2006. Available at http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/ar_mrsa_ca.html.

2. Siegel JD, Rhinehart E, Jackson M, et al. Management of Multidrug-Resistant Organisms in Healthcare Settings, 2006. Available at http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/pdf/ar/mdroGuideline2006.pdf

3. Muto CA, Jernigan JA, Ostrowsky BE, Richet HM, Jarvis WR, Boyce JM, Farr BM. SHEA guideline for preventing nosocomial transmission of multidrug-resistant strains of *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Enterococcus*. Infect Control Hosp Epidem 2003;24:362-386

4. Smith PW, Rusnak PG. Infection prevention and control in the long-term-care facility. Am J Infect Control. 1997;25: 488-512

5. Moran GJ, Krishnadasan A, Gorwitz RJ, et al. Methicillin-resistant *S. aureus* infections among patients in the emergency department. N Engl J Med 2006;355;7 666-673

More information can be found at the Montana Antimicrobial Resistance Awareness web site: http://mara.mt.gov/mara-index.shtml

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